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ABSTRACT

This paper describes similarities between the areas of second language (L2) teacher education and mother tongue (MT) literacy teacher education: similarity of definition, similarity of history, and similarity of a current pedagogical issue (immersion is necessary but not sufficient). Practitioners in both fields need to modulate the sharp polarity between two terms: (1) acquisition vs. learning for learners, and (2) immersion vs. telling by teachers. A concept called revealing, a pedagogical activity performed by the teacher, could be inserted between conceptualizations of immersing and telling and would allow binary opposition to evolve into a continuum of implicit to explicit teaching. A description of teaching phonemic awareness to 6-year-olds and examples of strategies for directing older students' attention to larger forms of written language (topic sentences, sentence fragments, and combining generalization and detail in expository writing) serve as examples of revealing. (Contains 18 references.) (JP)

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ED 365 134

Immersing, Revealing and Telling:
A Continuum from Implicit to Explicit Teaching*

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Participants in this conference work in second language (L2) teacher education; I work primarily in mother tongue (MT) literacy teacher education. There are three important similarities between our two fields:

similarity of definition,

similarity of history, and

similarity of our current pedagogical issue.

Similarity of definition

Both second language learning and literacy learning require the learning of **secondary** Discourses. I am using the term **Discourses**, with a capital **D**, with the same meaning Donald Freeman gave it in his plenary address to this conference:

> a way of being in the world that involves new ways of using language, and an identity kit of new roles and social relationships in which that language is used (from Gee, 1990).

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Secondary Discourses are those learned outside the home, usually in formal educational settings. This is true of both second language and literacy, and certainly of literacy in a second language. I'll return to one implication of this secondary status in the last section on 'telling'.

Similarity of pedagogical history

Both our fields have a past tradition of formalistic, "bottom up" teaching that emphasized drill on the correct use of small language units: oral/aural pattern practice for second language; short-answer excercises for phonics, reading comprehension, and writing.

Now, both our fields have turned that former pedagogy upside down, and have shifted the teaching focus to meaning and function: communicative language teaching for L2; "whole language" and "process writing" for literacy.

Similarity of one current teaching problem

Finally, we share a problem. According to Henry Widdowson's Aspects of language teaching (1990), immersion in even the richest and most authentic communicative activities is not sufficient for many L2 learners. Similarly, immersion in even the richest literacy activities is not sufficient for many MT literacy learners. In both our fields, immersion is necessary but not sufficient.

Thus our shared problem: We both need to figure out how best

to re-introduce some explicit attention to language forms--now recontextualized from isolated practice of component parts to their insertion into communicative experience. Put another way, I'm suggesting that in both our fields we have to modulate the sharp polarity between two terms:

acquisition vs. learning for learners, and

immersion vs. telling by teachers.

That's where the middle term in my title, revealing, comes in.

Changing Polarities to a Continuum

The binary opposition between acquisition and learning comes originally from L2 education, but it has been influential in literacy education as well. Here is how the two terms are contrasted by James Gee, the sociolinguist whose definition of Discourses Donald Freeman and I have adopted:

> Acquisition is a process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching. It happens in natural settings, which are meaningful and functional (in the sense that the acquirers know that they need to acquire the thing they are exposed to in order to function and they in fact want to so function). This is how most people come to control their first language.
>
> Learning is a process that involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching (though not necessarily from

someone officially designated as a teacher) or through certain life experiences that trigger conscious reflection. This teaching or reflection involves explanation and analysis, that is, breaking down the thing to be learned into its analytic parts. It inherently involves attaining, along with the matter being taught, some degree of meta-knowledge about the matter (1990 p. 146).

Having defined these two processes by contrast with each other, Gee then qualifies their separateness:

> Much of what we come by in life, after our initial enculturation, involves a mixture of acquisition and learning. However, the balance between the two can be quite different in different cases, and different at different stages in the developmental process (1990 p. 146).

Here is a more general view of human learning, developed in Gee's more recent (1992) book:

> Human minds seem by our very nature to learn best from a rich set of concrete date, including prototypical examples. But the mind can't record for later analysis and generalization every feature of every case. And so the role of assistance--given less consciously by parent to child, more deliberately by teacher to student or class--is to focus attention on the most significant features for the purpose at hand, or those

features that particular learners seem to be ignoring. With young children, the teacher both selects examples and focuses attention at the moment of encounter. With older learners, including teachers as learners, the teacher may set a problem that engages the learners in enquiry.

In short, I want to change the binary opposition into a continuum of implicit to explicit teaching by inserting between **immersing** and **telling** a third kind of pedagogical activity--an activity I'm calling **revealing**--which can contribute to the re-socialization of attention required in both L2 and literacy. (Cazden [1992] calls the entire continuum "whole language plus": "whole language" referring to immersion, and "plus" referring to temporary instructional detours for attention to component features and cultural differences in language use.)

As conference participants in Hong Kong pointed out, **revealing** as I am using the term is closely related to the more familiar terms **enquiry** and **discovery**. The difference is that enquiry and discovery refer to mental activity of learners, whereas revealing, parallel to immersion and telling, refers to the pedagogical activity of the teacher.

Some Examples of Revealing

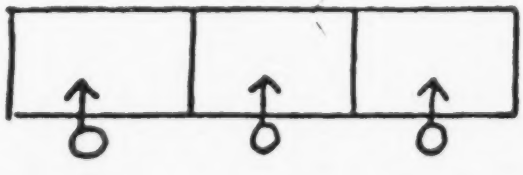
My first example comes from teaching phonemic awareness to children about six years old. I present it here with the hope that it will give you a 'feel' for the meaning of revealing activities more generally. This will be followed by three

examples of strategies for calling older students' attention to larger forms of written language--here to topic sentences, sentence fragments, and combining generalization and detail in expository writing. Together, I hope these examples will suggest advantages of engaging L2 students and teachers in guided enquiry activities involving texts of whatever kind they are expected to read and write.

Phonemic awareness

Consider one teaching strategy from the very successful New Zealand Reading Recovery program for 6-year-old children who have not caught on to reading and writing (already imported into Australia, the United States and Britain). One component of the program is helping children attend to the sounds in their own speech. One segment of each lesson is devoted to writing: The child composes a message--at first just one sentence--on a topic of the child's choice, and writes it with the tutor's help.

One kind of help involves a technique adapted from Soviet psychologist, Elkonin (1973). The tutor draws a set of boxes that match the number of sounds (not letters) in the word. So, for example, there would be a set of three boxes, not four, for the word made:



The tutor demonstrates how to slide counters up into the boxes, left to right, as she says the word with exaggerated slowness; the child imitates her actions, identifies any letters heard in that process and their place in the sound sequence, and writes them in the appropriate boxes.

For learners, the activity of having to slow pronunciation to match the finger action makes possible a new kind of attention to the sounds of their own speech. The teacher's language is directed to involving the child in the activity, in which the child will come to attend in a new way. Thus, a teaching technique has been developed that successfully teaches phonemic awareness by revealing the sound structure to the child without explicitly telling the child linguistic labels or orthographic rules.

There are at least two reasons why revealing can be more hepful than telling, especially for young learners. First, information learning from telling seems often to be indigestable for later use. Readers have trouble applying orthographic rules in "sounding out" unfamiliar words in reading; and there is little evidence that writers can use grammar lessons about parts of speech and the components of complete sentences to improve their texts.

Second, attempts to tell some general statement about the way written langauge works risk oversimplifying complex reality. In the Reading Recovery case, longitudinal research on Maori children's progress shows, for example, that the most common

words that 6-year-old children learn to write without help during the Reading Recovery program reveal to the child that many letters represent different sounds, not just one: for example, that the letter a represents the five different sounds in the words a, at, play, father, and said. Conversely, the seeming security of being told a 'rule" may make it less likely that the learner will independently pay attention to variations in the pattern as they are encountered (Clay and Cazden, 1990).

This kind of training in attending to sounds in one's own speech is not the only kind of activity in Reading Recovery that reveals to children features of language forms. The teacher also asks the child to practice writing some of the words in the child's sentence from memory. The purpose is both to get into the child's mind visual images of frequently encountered spelling patterns (like **-ed** in **red**), and to encourage the child's use of a visual memory strategy that's so useful in English language literacy.

Basically, the Reading Recovery teacher is calling the young child's attention to where to listen and look, but does not tell the child what to find, and does not discuss in any metalingual terms what the child discovers. The emphasis throughout is on the learning of strategies not items. That's what makes it possible for these young learners, initially behind their more successful literacy-learning classmates, to accelerate their learning and catch up.

Topic sentences

For his doctoral research, University of Malaya educator Moses Samuel (1992) compared two writing classes in what he called Boston Community College (a two-year tertiary institution). Included in his dissertation is a case study of a Chinese student who had been in the United States for four years. Lee (as Samuel refers to him) "often experienced frustration because he was not understood....He wanted this course to help him effectively express his intentions in writing" (p. 157).

Samuel's interviews with Lee throughout the term focused on Lee's changing understanding of topic sentences, one of the features of successful paragraphs emphasized by his composition teacher, Mr. (Ralph) R. The following is quoted, with some ellipses, from Samuel's account:

> Lee first encountered the notion of the topic sentence in Ralph R.'s section. His previous English instructors in China had not mentioned it, nor had his ESL instructor in Boston Community College. Lee found the concept of the topic sentence intriguing for two reasons. It was a summary or a one-sentence abstract of the paragraph; and when it was also the first sentence in a paragraph, it provided the reader with cues about what to expect from that paragraph. Lee called the topic sentence "a **gate**" through which readers could enter his text. The gate-metaphor was Lee's own way of explaining the function of the topic

sentence; it was not used in class, nor was it mentioned in the textbook. And to underscore the personal significance of his new-found discovery, Lee observed: "If I learn to write good topic sentence, my reader will understand me better." At this point of the course, Lee thought that the topic sentence was the key to readers comprehending his written work.

Here is a composition entitled "The best day I ever had in my life" which Lee wrote on week four, the week after the interview above.

The best day I ever had in my life

The best day, which I have ever have in my life was I bought a new car at last Tuesday....

Recounting his experience in writing this piece Lee noted:

> I want to write about first day I bought my car. So, in my topic sentence I say why is it the best day. Because I bought a new car. I also use the words from the topic, from the assignment Mr. R. gave to us. "The best day I had in my life..." so that he know I answer his question.

Episode #2: Week 6

Rethinking the 'topic sentence is the first-sentence' rule

In week 6, Lee began questioning the value of having a topic sentence as his first sentence. His reservations

surfaced when he wrote a composition Ralph R. had assigned called "A New Experience". In this piece he described what was to him the novel experience of placing an order for an AT&T [telephone] calling card over the telephone. While writing this composition, it dawned on him that a topic sentence which disclosed up front what the new experience was about would rob his piece of the drama of narrating the uniqueness of experience.

Lee contemplated the effect of placing his topic sentence in different places in the text. He showed me two drafts of the same composition. The first draft had the topic sentence as the first sentence; and in the second draft the topic was at the end. The second version is what he handed in to Ralph R.

Here are the [first and last sentences of] two versions of the composition with his topic sentence [underlined] in different positions.

Version 1

Today I applied a AT&T Universal card through the telephone. This is a new experience for me... [four narrative sentences]... I will receive the card and the welcome package in three weeks.

Version 2

Today I dialled 411 and asked the phone number for the AT&T company.... [five narrative sentences].... I will receive the card and the welcome package in three weeks. This is a new experience for me to apply for a AT&T credit card over the telephone.

The following excerpt from an interview, reveals how Lee thought about the two versions.

L: First time I wrote like 'This is a new experience for me, to use telephone to apply a credit card.' This is the topic sentence. I want to put this, if I put this on top it doesn't look too good.

M: why

L: If I put this on top people know the rest. Then no surprise. They won't read the whole thing (laughter). They know what I talk.

M: mmm

L: No special. ... So I try to roll the things. Put the conversation inside there, then tell in the end -- this is my experience. Do you think that is good?

M: mmm

L: Like the first time I want to put on top but I think if they read the sentence they already know what is going on.

In the above excerpt, Lee was re-evaluating his earlier view that the topic sentence was the 'gate into the text.' That view which was also endorsed by the textbook for the course ... raised for Lee a dilemma about the degree of explicitness with which one should open one's composition....

In seeing the effectiveness of the topic sentence as a function of a reader's reaction to it, Lee came to realize, as the above episode reveals, that being understood is only part of the problem of writing; one has also to hold the readers' interest -- an aspect of writing which was not stressed in Ralph R.'s skills-based orientation to writing....

Episode #3: Week 8

Further thoughts on the topic sentence

In the eighth week Lee talked to me of some further thoughts he had had on the topic sentence. He had been looking at some magazine articles to examine how "other writers" used the topic sentence. Lee remarked: "I looked carefully but could not find the topic sentence [in those articles]".

Then he added: "In some cases the topic sentence is a paragraph." By this he meant that more than one sentence performed the function of the topic sentence, (i.e., a paragraph -- rather than a topic sentence -- defined what the article was about)....

In the same conversation Lee made some further observations that I found insightful. Referring to the articles he had read in which there was no topic sentence, Lee added jokingly: "They have invisible topic sentences."

I pushed him further to clarify what he meant by the term "invisible topic sentence". Lee replied that these were topic sentences which were not visibly present in a text. Despite their absence, he had a clear sense of the point that the author was making in the article he read.

Lee said that he could easily reconstruct the topic sentence from what was given in the paragraph, although he saw no point in doing so because the text was already clear without an explicit topic sentence (Samuel, 1992, from pp. 158-164).

Lee's discoveries about topic sentences were the result of learner-initiated enquiry into a wider range of texts than his teacher had in mind in his lesson. When such ethnographic enquiry into the distribution of particular language forms is stimulated by the teacher, it is one form of revealing.

More generally, if students are taught an initially simplified version of a complex idea--as may often be a useful teaching tactic--they need over time to reanalyse it and attain a more complex understanding. Then the initial version will have

served to get them into the speaking or writing activity and call the phenomenon to their attention. Some learners may initiate such re-analysis for themselves, as Lee did; others will need to be stimulated to do so by the teacher. In L2 teaching, Widdowson (1990) recommends giving students a formulaic utterance that works for a particular communicative purpose, and then provide situational contexts that motivate appropriate modifications.

Sentence fragments

One of the difficult aspects of writing all multi-sentence texts is figuring out how to punctuate them, especially how to use periods and all the other segmentation marks (commas, colons, semicolons, dashes, parentheses) that cue readers to relationships among units of meaning. One can teach heuristics, but unfortunately the overall picture of mature usage is not the rigid rule-governed system that is sometimes taught in schools.

Because of this complexity, Frank Smith (1983) claims that it is impossible for any teacher to be explicit about rules, and that the only way to learn is to "read like a writer" (as Lee did in his community college class). But there is, it seems to me, a middle way. Although I think I do read that way, noticing how authors whose texts are a pleasure to read go about their craft, I did not figure out just when fragments stand alone in professional writing until a class of teachers and I set out to collect examples and analyse them inductively.

Here are two of our examples : At the end of the first

paragraph of the chapter about "The Ending" in On Writing Well, Zinsser (1985) writes:

> In fact, you should give as much thought to choosing your last sentence as you did your first. Well, almost as much (p. 77).

And columnist Anna Quindlen ends her column about the Gulf War in the Sunday New York Times:

> (F)or some time the war in the Persian Gulf has made the world a simpler place....But not for long (2/24/91).

Such professional usage is why Cordeiro, Giacobbe and Cazden (reprinted in Cazden, 1992) gave full 'credit' to a first grader who, hating sausages, wrote in a long piece about a large family gathering: "We are having pancakes for breakfast. Without sausages."

Only after analysis did we understand the patterns of these (and other) successful fragments:

function: emphasis;

form: most frequently an adjectival or adverbial phrase that could have been attached to the preceeding sentence;

placement: almost always at the end of a paragraph.

In her chapter on "Learners as ethnographers," Heath (1983) recommends such enquiry into patterns of oral and written language--in varied speech situations in the local community as well as different types of written texts. At the University of South Australia, Clair Woods is developing a BA specialization in

Writing and Language that requires ethnographic enquiry into writing practices (personal communication, May, 1993).

When such ethnographic enquiry is stimulated and guided by the teacher, it can be a powerful form of revealing. Especially for older learners, it can be combined with metalingual discussion that I would then categorize further toward the telling end of the implicit/explicit continuum.

Combining generalization and detail in expository writing

One important feature of expository writing that is difficult for many inexperienced writers is combining abstraction with vivid examples and detail. Books on expository writing agree that abstraction is a critical dimension for writers to control; but they discuss it in different terms. To Moffett, abstraction means generalization:

> The hinge between narrative and generalization may be the most crucial point in the thinking process, because it is then that the mind moves from once-upon-a-time to the timelessness of "recurring" events, from token to type (Moffett, 1985, p. 3).

To Ann Berthoff:

> (A)straction is not synonymous with generalization, ...it is not the antithesis of "concrete." Abstraction is the apprehension of form and is accomplished in two different modes, by means of successive generalizations and by means of (what Suzanne K. Langer calls) "indirect, intensive insight" (Berthoff, 1984, p. 38).

To call attention to the abstraction/ detail dimension of actual texts, I asked two actor-teachers at the Bread Loaf School of English (Vermont, USA) to script for two voices part of an

essay by Annie Dillard (1985) on "Seeing". I explained the task as a shift in mental distance and suggested the metaphor of a camera shifting back and forth from wide-angle panorama to zoom lens. Here is their scripting, as they read it aloud in a class of secondary school teachers, rewritten here to show the voice of detail in lower case, the voice of abstraction in capitals:

> It was sunny one evening last summer at Tinker Creek; the sun was low in the sky, upstream. I was sitting on the sycamore log bridge with the sun at my back, watching the shiners THE SIZE OF MINNOWS who were feeding over the muddy sand in skittery schools. Again and again, one fish, then another, turned for a split second across the current and flash!...LIKE A SUDDEN DAZZLE OF THE THINNEST BLADE, A SPARKLING OVER A DUN AND OLIVE GROUND AT CHANCE INTERVALS FROM EVERY DIRECTION. Then I noticed white specks, some sort of pael petals, small, floating from under my feet on the creek's surface, very slow and steady. So I blurred my eyes and gazed toward the brim of my hat and saw a new world. I saw the pale white circles roll up, roll up, LIKE THE WORLD'S TURNING, MUTE AND PERFECT, and I saw the linear flashes, gleaming silver, LIKE STARS BEING BORN AT RANDOM, DOWN A ROLLING SCROLL OF TIME. Something broke and something opened. I filled up LIKE A NEW WINESKIN. I breathed an air LIKE LIGHT; I saw a light LIKE WATER. I was THE LIP OF A FOUNTAIN THE CREEK FILLED FOREVER. I was ETHER, THE LEAF IN THE ZEPHER; I was FLESH-FLAKE, FEATHER, BONE (Dillard, in Moffett, 1985, p. 410).

In that moment of scripted reading, the actors' alternating voices dramatized Dillard's alternating perspective--between perceptions from the creek and metaphors from her mind, or between "bottom-up" and "top-down" sources of knowledge in cognitive psychology terms--as the scene changed before her eyes.

Professional writers like Dillard develop this shift along an abstraction dimension to a fine art. But I wanted also to demonstrate to the teachers that such shifting is a basic

cognitive process of the human mind, though expressed differently at different ages and in different cultures. Katherine Nelson's (1989) edited volume of analyses of the pre-sleep monologues of one little girl provide an example. Here is Emily, at 32 months, talking to herself in her crib about a race (presumably a marathon) that she wanted to watch her Daddy run. I scripted this for three voices:

> normal type: remembering the past
> underlined: anticipating the future
> CAPITALS: commenting on life in general
>
> Today Daddy went, trying to get into the race but the people said no. So he has to watch on television. I DON'T KNOW WHY THAT IS, MAYBE CAUSE THERE'S TOO MANY PEOPLE. I THINK THAT'S WHY, WHY HE COULDN'T GO IN IT. So he has to watch on television. On Halloween day, then he can run, run a race and I can watch him. I WISH I COULD WATCH HIM. But they said no no no. Daddy daddy daddy. No no no. Have to have to watch on television (p. 113).

Small groups of older students can script texts, others' or their own, to highlight various aspects of their construction, negotiating interpretations to the point of decisions about how to separate the text into voices and how to read it aloud in a kind of "readers' theatre". (Cazden, 1991, gives further examples.) Scripting expository texts that are monologic in published format requires particularly interesting interpretive work for both MT and L2 learners and teachers. But there are added values for the latter.

In all the work of scripting and performing texts, focal attention is called to meaning: to voices and how they interact. Sentence-level syntax remains transparent, attended to only

subsidiarily. In classrooms of native speakers of the language of the texts, this subsidiary attention has added value only as the language of literature is more complex than the language of conversation. But in second language classrooms, this subsidiary attention can be extremely important. The scripting activities motivate repeated readings, and discussion of those readings. In the process, out-of-awareness, valid models of the target language are reinforced in each learner's mind. In classrooms where the teacher is not a fluent speaker of the target language, incorporating well-written texts into oral activities becomes even more critical (as Elley & Mangubhai's 1983 research showed a decade ago.)

The choice of texts is of course important: not only which genres, but by which authors from which cultures. Asian Voices in English (Chan & Harris, 1991) is a set of essays that should be useful in the selection of literature. Beyond that category are all the local non-literary kinds of writing--in newspapers, advertisements etc.

And what about Telling?

Telling refers here to teacher-led activities in which some metalanguage is used for explicit discussion of language itself. As an example that may make the more general need clear, consider again the Elkonin boxes used in Reading Recovery, but now from the perspective of the teachers being resocialized about language as they are learning to be Reading Recovery tutors. Marie Clay

has found that during the year-long training, one of the most difficult concepts for teachers to learn is the distinction between the number of speech sounds in a word and the number of letters in its spelling, presumably because adults' mental representation of words has been so deeply influenced by experience with print (Clay & Cazden, 1990, p. 221, fn. 2).

The important point here is that in this case of secondary socialization as a teacher, new learning contradicts the old. the old conception of words as composed of letters is not wrong. But in a new situation, for a new purpose, a new conception of words as composed of sounds is needed. Whereas with the children, the teacher language is only used to get the children into the activity, with teachers talking about this contrast metalinguistically--whether using the colloquial term **sounds** or the more technical term **phonemes**--is helpful.

More often than we may realize, literacy behaviors in school and university do contradict students' previous experience. Five-year-olds may have been taught to print their names in capital letters at home, but the teacher expects lower-case writing except for the first letter. Primary grade children may have held an appreciative audience with episodic narratives in the kitchen, but the teacher expects more topic-centered narratives during morning news ('sharing time' in Cazden 1988).

In the case of adult learners, Chinese students may be well practiced in embedding the point of a paragraph near the end (perhaps as an expression of politeness), but ESL teachers (like

Lee's Mr. R) want the topic sentence right at the beginning. Even the value of communicative activities themselves discussion with students whose previous educational experience has been with more formal teacher lectures and more passive and ritualistic student roles (Ron Scollon, personal communication, October, 1991).

Where such differences between primary and secondary socialization exist--between home and school or first and second culture as between first and second language--the teacher's goal should not be to eradicate prior learning but to supplement it. We seek additive, not subtractive, bilingualism in the broadest sense.

In such situations, teaching strategies limited to immersing and revealing run the risk of 'naturalizing' the new ways, and implying that the learner's previous actions are illogical, stupid, or at least just plain wrong. Instead, we need to discuss, critically, both the old and the new, and the differences of situational appropriateness of language forms, and often of power relationships among the people who use them. That requires some form of telling--or better, of talking about. This is one example of **critical literacy**.

Conclusions

Professional discussions about optimal combinations of pedagogical strategies along what I'm calling the implicit/explicit continuum so often turn into arguments between strongly held opposing views. Brumfit (in his chapter in James &

Garrett, 1991) helps explain the disciplinary histories of teacher education that feed such controversies, at least in the UK. He describes a contentious parentage divided between applied linguists such as David Crystal and Michael Stubbs, who give more emphasis to language forms and explicit teaching, and English educators from a more literary background, such as Harold Rosen and James Britton, who place more emphasis on meaning and implicit learning.

Valuing the contributions of both sets of "parents", I suggest that we need to teach along with whole continuum, with teachers as well as with their students.

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